

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Holdsworth, Carl

Interview by

Patricia Young

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INTERVIEWEE: CAL HOLDSWORTH

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

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TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with Cal Holdsworth for the Historical Society of Palm Desert. My name is Patricia Young, and I am the interviewer. This is January 8, 1980, and we are conducting the interview at 73349 Shadow Mountain Drive, Mr. Holdsworth's home, and it's eleven-ten in the morning.

It's on then.

CH: I was associated with the Darby Company from way back in the thirties. The Darby Company got its name from Ray Darby, who was the supervisor in Los Angeles for many years in the fourth district. That took in Inglewood and Gardena and the southwest area of Los Angeles County. And we did lots of building. We did, built hundreds of units during the war days. We were located in Inglewood and we were able to get the priorities to build and produce. About the end of the war he became interested

in this desert area and bought a section of land over next to what is now Bermuda Dunes and across the way from the Palm Desert Country Club which after when it was developed was really known as Palm City. Now this was before Washington Street was even put in, so we used to come down here and look at this thing and figure out what we were going to do. We were friendly with a lot of Japanese that were displaced from the southwest area of Los Angeles. And so when the war ended, why he decided to develop this section of land into an agricultural property. Drilled several wells and so forth and I, being with him for so long, was the head man. And so I came down here many, many times and in order to get out to the property we went up to Hueneme, this was right after the war ended, and bought several of their big weapons carriers and four-wheel drive vehicles and brought them down here. And we used to park them at Bill Carter's place, which is now the Massey Company. And then we would get in them and come out across the desert. That was the only way we could get out to this property because there was no road in there. The ordinary car would get stuck. So we did develop this thing and I don't remember just when, but there was a road, Carter

put in a road which took off from Adams Street. And then came back to about where Washington is. However, it was just a sand road and you had to watch out you didn't get stuck in it. And so many time we would come down to the desert and we would have to, there was no way, no crossing over the railroad tracks, so we would have to time ourselves from the time that we crossed the intersection at Thousand Palms and it was, as I remember, nine and nine-tenths miles was where the crossing was where we could get across the railroad and onto what is now Adams Street in Bermuda Dunes. And then we could make our way over to the property which was just about halfway between Washing . . . or between the Highway 10 and, of course, in those days it was known as the old 99 and 111. And many times we would come down and, as I say, at night we would have to time ourselves to know when to turn across there. And then many times I'd come down and brought my wife down and strapped her into a weapons carrier and took off over the sand dunes to come out to this property. During this time we did build two buildings there. One was sort of a duplex where we lived in it, and old Chuck Langwell, the fellow that was doing the grading for us, lived in the other half. Then we built

another building to house the Japanese which, as they were released, he brought them down here to develop this acreage. Now I'm talking about 1946 and 1947. However, of course, they were unsuccessful in developing this thing because they did not have the know-how to work this kind of land. They were used to working around Gardena and Culver City. And the winds would wipe them out. because they had no windbreaks which, of course, nowadays we know we have to build that first or grow that first before we can begin to grow any row crops. However, the old, some of the old grape stakes the fences and the Tamarisks which we planted are still there. You'll see them there at where the old Darby Road takes off from Washington. Anyway, that was my early experience in the desert. Now I disliked it very much, but it was my job to come down here and oversee this thing so I did make many, many trips down here. And stayed over after we got the house built. Now in the meantime or in the latter years, let's say in maybe 1951 or 1952, Washington was developed and put in, which made it much easier to get to this property. At that time we began to like it more, and we used to come down over the weekend over, we would leave crowded Los Angeles and come down. And stay over

so then Mrs. Darby and I, well, to, I'm ahead of my story because Mr. Darby died very suddenly in Los Angeles. That would be about 1953. So Mrs. Darby, the widow, decided that she wanted to build a house down here to live down here part of the time. And so she said, "Well, Cal, if you'll build a house for me, I'll give you an acre of land and you build one at the same time." And so I begin to build this thing and developed a little house which is still there. Now it's the, oh, Palmer did own it and then she sold it to this medical clinic, which is in there now. They added to it, so I wouldn't even know it. But we used to come down here over the weekends and stay over. And so we used to begin to say, I hate to go back on Sunday nights. And as I laughingly say now when people ask me why I came down, I always say, well, one time we were down here and we just didn't go back when we said we hated to go back. So, anyway, we did liquidate stuff in L. A. and we came down here and lived in this resort or temporary house for awhile. This was in 1953. Then we scouted the area to try to find the nicest wind-free area, and found it at Silver Spur and bought an acre of land up there in 1953 and built one of the larger homes which is up in that area. And it's

now occupied by our, in fact, the president of the Chamber of Commerce bought it from us.

PY: Don McNeeley.

CH: McNeeley, that's right. So anyway, I then began to build some income units down here and built many duplexes and triplexes and over the years. Not in a big productive way like the building that's going on now, but just myself and subcontractors that I worked with. And so anyway, we wound up settled here very happily. However, of course, Palm Desert is not like it used to be. We used to, I'm very glad that I was able to raise two daughters down here. That would be in 1953, because in those days everybody knew everybody. And you could drive out and sail across any of these highways without even looking because of whoever was coming in you cut off, why they knew you and wave at you and that's as far as it would go because the roads were such that you wouldn't be going very fast anyway. But that's about the extent of my experience. The only most interesting part about it, of course, it back in 1946 and 1947 when we did attempt to locate or relocate these Japanese, which were turned loose from the camp up in Central California. And they were friends of ours. And we tried to locate

them down here, but of course, failed because we didn't know anything about the farming and failed to investigate which we should have done. So anyway, about 1950, well, it's prior to 1953. It would be probably 1951 or 1952 when we put in Darby Road. And subdivided it into five-acre parcels. And we sold those five-acre parcels for twenty-four hundred and fifty dollars. We put in the road, which is Darby Road, and put in our own water system there. We had a well and put in a pipeline and we subbed out that construction work to a fellow in Indio by the name of Shay. He was doing that kind of work at that time. Of course, Darby Road is still there and we're, I'm very ashamed of it because we should have built instead of selling it and letting the people build as they saw fit. And now it's just nothing but a shack row. And here it is right adjacent to Bermuda Dunes and across the way from Palm Desert Country Club, which developed into pretty nice property. But anyway, we did it, and as I say, we sold those places for twenty-four hundred and fifty dollars for a five-acre piece, if you can imagine. Which in those days, why I forget what Darby paid for that land. It was something around less than a hundred dollars an acre with probably around, more like

fifty dollars an acre.

PY: Is that where Ida Sunderland lives now?

CH: That's where she lives. That's the house that I built for Mrs. Darby. And the one that we had, that we built as a resort house, is just across the driveway or next door to her. Next door north of her. They're both concrete block buildings.

PY: When you say a resort house, what are *you, what do you mean,*

CH: Well, I mean it was built, it wasn't, I say, to us it was just a resort place to come to over a weekend. We built it for that purpose. However, it was complete inasmuch as it had two bedrooms and a bath and so forth, all hooked up. And we had a little swimming pool there, which we built. And we used to have a lot of fun there.

PY: Have you noticed over the years that there is a desert-type of architecture? That's what I was trying to get at when you said resort. I was wondering if was a different . . .

CH: No. No, we thought at that time that the concrete block would be the best thing to build with down here, but then later we found that it's not by no means because it gets hot and stays hot. And doesn't cool off like a frame building. But as far as the desert, the only thing is,

of course, we build these big picture windows which, of course, we should not do because now because of the energy shortage. But at that time we were building them, and thought nothing of exposing half the room to the hot sun. And the cold air, when it is cold.

PY: Was there, what kind of cooling was there at that time? when you were . . .

CH: Well, on this particular house that we had, that I call our resort house, I had just a water cooler. And when we first came down here and built these buildings for us and our workers to stay in when we were developing this ranch, we just had a sprinkler on the roof would turn the hose and had it sprinkle and run off the roof. That's the only cooling we had. Because we didn't even have electricity out here at that time. Well, it was out here because we were running our pumps with it, but we had no extended it to the buildings yet.

PY: Did any of the Japanese end up staying, the workers that you had?

CH: I don't think so. I know there are a lot of Japanese in Coachella and Thermal and that area working down here in farming, but I don't think that they are any of these. I think those that we brought down were, went back to where

they were familiar with that type of farming because the row crop farming down here is a highly specialized operation. And much different than in around Los Angeles and where they were from.

PY: You said your daughters went to school down here.

CH: Well, yes. I had two daughters. I had one that was born after we developed this property down here. And then the other one, when we moved down, she went to Coachella High. That's before Indio High was built. And she started going in to Coachella High from over on Washington Street when we first moved down here. Went there because we here just a few months before the school term closed, so we hurried up and came down to get her enrolled in this school.

PY: How did she get there?

CH: At that time we neighbors pooled their transportation. There was no bus out there at that time. And, but I don't remember who, but somebody would come by and pick her up. And many times we would take her and pick up somebody else on the way. And it was such a happy time for them because, like here in Palm Desert when they were both going to school, and of course, my older daughter finished school before my younger one, but we did have a lot of fun because

whenever they were going out dating and so forth, why we just about knew everybody. If we didn't know them, we only had to call one of the other gal's parents and they knew them. And so, you know, we double checked that way, but there was not the condition that there is now. It was a very happy time. And we used to many time take them out to the old Briggs Ranch. They used to have a lot of big parties out there down in Coachella. The Kent Ranch, that's another oldtimer that was out, way out on Monroe. And they had a daughter in the same age group, so we would many time have eight or nine gals in a station wagon. And then one of the other neighbors would go and pick them up, prearranged.

PY: That's great. Were you all part of the Shadow Mountain Club group, too?

CH: No. No, I saw that develop. Saw it when it was just a piece of raw land, of course, when we first came down here. And we never belonged to it. We were always seemed like we were too busy. But that reminds me when we used to come down here over the weekend, many time just my wife Florence and I would come down and leave our daughter with our, my mother in L. A. And we would have to, the only way we could get over onto to 111 was by means of a

weapons carrier. Now that's not a jeep; that's a big weapons carrier. And a very hideous-looking thing, piece of equipment, but one that you couldn't stop it. It would go over those sand dunes and it just wouldn't mire down. And many time we would decide we would want to go into Palm Springs for dinner. So we would come across to 111 down through the Whitewater Wash and onto 111 and go in. And then we would be so ashamed of this thing that we would park way out at this end and walk into Chi Chi's or one of the places that were known in there because at that time there wasn't much in Indio in the way of dinner houses. As a matter of fact, I remember when we, during those early days when we used to come down and the Mayfair was the only big market there in Indio, which is, well, it moved out of there years ago, but you used to be able to buy your meat at the butcher counter there in the Mayfair and then they had a cafe in there and you would take whatever meat you bought, a steak or whatever, and they had a fixed price. They would, for the balance of the meal, and they would take your steak and cook it and that was one of the highlights, one of the nicer places to go to. Of course, it was all counters and so forth.

PY: That's great. (chuckle) When did Palm Desert start

developing then in terms of dinner houses?

CH: Well, at first, of course, at first the other side of the highway developed first. And I'm trying to think of what they called it.

PY: I think that was Palm Village.

CH: Palm Village, right. Palm Village was the first to develop and that's where old Angelo, that's why Angelo's over there. Now that's, you know where that is, that's the old fish and, which has gone broke. That used to be known as Angelo's. Now that's an oldtimer. Now that was here way back in those early days. But on this side of the highway there was practically nothing until Cliff Henderson subdivided and started Shadow Mountain Club.

PY: Did you ever go to Angelo's for dinner?

CH: Oh, many times we went there, went there to dinner.

PY: What was that like?

CH: Well, it was an Italian, and he's still here, by the way. And I can't think of his name. He's in Palm Springs the last we saw him. He was chef or bartender in one of those cafes along there on Shadow Mountain, on Palm Canyon. But he used to, it was a place where he would come out, you know, and just sit with you. And it was real good, a real good Italian cafe. The real

authentic kind. If you wanted lasagne made up, why you would tell them the day before because that's something that they just under the real Italian way they don't just put it together all of a sudden like you do a lot of things. But he used to improvise. There was one time that we had, it turned out, it was the wife's birthday, and he found out that it was her birthday. We mentioned it, that, oh, we're having a birthday celebration so bring us an extra bottle of wine or something like that. He went back and took a loaf of bread and decorated it all up with whipped cream and candles and brought that out and sang "Happy Birthday." And the gal that worked there with him, the waitress, I think that's about all they had was him and the waitress that worked there. But it was fun then. And we only had the one Gray's Market which as I remember it was over there alongside of where Houston Lumber is now, over in there. That's all there was is the one Gray's Market. And I think it became the Village Market. And then, of course, you had all these others come in here, like the Market Basket and so forth. But there was just that one market. And it was on the other side. In fact, there was no business this side as I remember. And so

any kind of business at all was the north side of 111.

PY: Where did people out this way gather and meet? Was there any kind of meeting place. I mean, like Angelo's or something else.

CH: No. Of course, a lot of them joined the Shadow Mountain Club who were interested in golfing, but we were always, I was always too busy and never went in for that.

PY: What about before Cliff Henderson developed this side? Was there any sense of community or people meeting, anything like that?

CH: Not that I knew of. Of course, we were then located out there.

PY: Right.

CH: At that time, so by the time we really got back here, why I mean, by the time we moved here, Cliff Henderson had already built the Shadow Mountain Club because, as I say, we moved into Silver Spur in about 1953.

PY: What was the area like when you moved back there?

CH: When we went back here, you say?

PY: When you moved back here, when you moved into Palm Desert area?

CH: Oh. Well, it was just from up there in Silver Spur you could just see all over. Of course, there was nothing

no blocking the view. Of course, that, we had that right here when we first built here before Sand Rock went in and all these buildings that's developed. That's in the last, oh, what, five or six years. We built that where Cooks' are living about ten years ago. That's about ten years old. We lived in there for about four years, and then we built this and moved into it.

PY: Had Silver Spur developed as an area at the time you moved?

CH: Yes. Swilk already and Roy St. Leon was with him, she still lives here, by the way. Now there's an oldtimer for you. What's her first name? St. Leon. She works, still working down here, whether she works for a realtor or an attorney, I don't know. But I tell you who can tell you is Morleys there in the, you know them, or have you contacted. They're oldtimers down here, Morleys, in the stationery, Palm Desert Stationery. They know where Mrs. St. Leon . . . Now another oldtimer would be Doris Allen because they built this place, this big gray home, which was already here. Now they were one of the first homes to build in this area which was developed here, which we call Unit No. 1. And they built a big home and they were living here when we were here. He was

one of the directors and so forth of the water company. Let's see, at that time was there, of course, Silver Spur had its own water company at that time. But I'm trying to think what water company . . . Anyway, it was the Property Owners Association and their little office was over there, which is now torn down across the way from the new, well, that old building set there for a long time. And they just tore it down not too many months ago. Where the Palm Desert Property Owners headquarters were there. Would be across from where the City Hall used to be when they first opened. But, no, it was a fun place to be. Of course, when we went into Silver Spur in 1953, why everybody was putting in regular cooling, regular refrigerated cooling. However, you'll find a lot of these older places back here with the old water coolers still up on the roof whether they've . . . I think most of them have supplemented now with refrigerated cooling. But you'll find a lot of them with the water coolers on the roof. Which is good. I wish I had it to use during the interim time. There's a lot of times here when a water cooler would be very ample and you could leave your doors and windows open that way. Otherwise, you have to close up and it's not so good. But I can't

think of anything else to add. I don't know, I'll go back and look and see if I can find anything for you. I've got a box back there. Whether I gave it all to Ida or not. Have you talked to Swilk?

PY: Yes, I have to go back and speak to him again further.

CH: Yes. Of course, he was here in Palm Desert, I don't know how much before. I met him at first; the first time I met him was when we were looking for a place to build permanently. When we decided that we were not going to go back to Los Angeles, that we were going to build down here. And so then we found Silver Spur and, of course, met Swilk and

PY: Why didn't he ask for?

CH: Oh, to sell these five-acre pieces when we . . . see, we put in a road there that was one mile. Darby Road is one mile, goes back in there from Washington Street. And we divided these on both sides of this road that we put in into five-acre pieces. And we had ads running in L. A. papers and also I forget what they call this paper down here. It wasn't the Daily News, but it was something in Indio. But we were, you know, offering those as a get-away from Los Angeles because it was beginning to crowd up, of course, a lot.

PY: Was there much response?

CH: Oh, yes. We sold them all out, yes. Yes. Yes. Sold them all. I wish we hadn't because about the time that we sold them, why then things began to, well, of course, Carter had a terrible time with Bermuda Dunes when he first started it on account of wind, see. The winds used to sweep across there. And they would just get roads in and then covered up with sand. And they'd put them in again and another wind would come. And they used to bring bales of hay in there and throw it around there to try to hold the sand down until they got some trees started. Of course, in the meantime, why they were growing and, but that took time. When you first started a little Tamarisk thing, why it was just so high. It wasn't going to stop any of this wind. But in those days the winds used to be terrible. We seen it when you, right there where Mrs. Darby lived, or Ide Sunderland lives now, why I've seen it when you couldn't see across the road there. In fact, when I was building her house, we already had ours partly built. It was built enough that we could stay in it. I came down here with an old-time buddy of mine that had worked in the warehousing in the Inglewood area. And we came down to frame the roof

of Mrs. Darby's house. And a wind came up and we sat there in our house that we had there and watched that lumber blow away just like dealing a deck of cards at Las Vegas. These dealers, plywood just off. And it took us a whole day to go and gather up this lumber because it spread out several hundred feet over the desert there. It blew that hard. Now you don't have it. I don't know whether it doesn't blow as hard, but of course, everything that is built here and everything that's grown is that much of a wind break, naturally. But we sure don't have the winds we used to. Even when we built here, we used to sit up here and watch that dust storm go down because you didn't get it up here in the cove so much, see. At least you didn't get the dust, see. But you could sit up here before all this stuff was built and we watched that yellow, gray mass go right down. It seemed to follow, the worst part was over there where Highway 10 is now and the railroad. Of course, the railroad, they improved theirs with that, most of that, the worst part with that big Tamarisk catch they got. It's almost like a tunnel now, but those trains go through.

PY: So there's no wind in there, you mean.

CH: No. Well, it doesn't cover up the tracks.

PY: Yes.

CH: And once in awhile they'll get a bad wind there at the old, what is it, the Panorama Estates. That's probably one of the worst, windiest places there is left. Now that was developed in about 1955, along in there.

PY: Is that the mobile home park?

CH: No, no. It's a big development, you know where Date Palm is? And you go out Date Palm, just before you get to the big interchange that goes onto 10. It's that low section in there. I heard where it's going to be developed. Now somebody has taken it over. But I haven't seen anything. Now that's where you'll get your worst wind when you drop down off that freeway, and if it's windy and blowing, you won't hardly be able to see Date Palm from where you turn off the highway to Ramone Road. Then you'll kind of get out of it, but however, they're building up in there now. So I don't, it's going to stop a lot of that. But those streets and roads most of the time were all covered up. In fact, if you go up and down Date Palm now and look over there, you'll see this big subdivision in there. There's, oh, I don't know how many thousand lots in there that they subdivided. And put in the roads and

so forth. But now they're just covered up. However, I think they are digging some of them out and they're going to start something in there. It's the last cheap land that there is available in the desert.

PY: Is that how Bermuda Dunes developed?

CH: Yes, similar. Yes, Bill Carter just broke his heart on that Bermuda Dunes trying to get that started. And developed water, of course. In those days you could drill a well much less than today, it would be prohibitive. But they drilled a lot of wells in there. In fact, that one where the son lives now, not Dan, that's one of the sons, but Tom, Tom Carter. Now if you want to get some old history, I think he would remember. He might be too young. I don't know what his age is, but he, they were down here; his dad was a lumber salesman in L. A. and they moved down here. That's how we knew them so well because he and Darby worked together quite a bit in getting Washington through and some of those other streets that are in there.

PY: How did Palm Desert Country Club develop? Was that in when you were there?

CH: No, no, no. That was just a barren piece of sand dunes. And that developed just about the time that, I think it

would be about 1953, 1954, along in there when, just about the time that Silver Spur developed and we moved up in there. And that started, I forget the people's name that started that, and he was killed. And the whole family was killed, as a matter of fact in an airplane accident. Flying back and forth here they run into a mountain up here. That's some many years ago. And now Goodman has got it now. It started out as a complete retirement. You could not buy in there unless, I think, fifty-five was the youngest. In fact, it must still be much that way because there are no schools over there or near there. I don't know where those kids that are, that do live there go to school. They must be transported into Indio or sort of halfway between Indio and Palm Desert. Of course, how they, why they still hang onto that name, Palm Desert as we, it was started out as, what did I say it was, Palm City. And then, oh, it went broke a couple of times and new developers took it over. And then they changed the name to the Palm Desert Country Club. Of course, at that time, that was before Indian Wells, it was built before Indian Wells. And so it was known then as, and that's why, well, what I'm trying to say is that's probably why they called it Palm Desert Country Club

because there was nothing between here and there. If anything it would be part of Palm Desert because Indian Wells in those days was nothing but a, on the highway you can still see the chimneys that's there. That's along in there where they had those pictures out there, paintings, but right near there is an old, is a chimney standing and a fireplace. Now that used to be the hangout, when you say where did people hang out, that used to be the beer joint, the main place where you could go get a sandwich and beer. And it was built out of railroad ties. The whole building was built out of railroad ties on top, just like you build a log cabin.

PY: What happened to it?

CH: I don't know. It just, when Indian Wells, I guess, outlawed it as part of Indian Wells now. And they probably condemned it. Used to be a motel in there, too. But I stayed in many a times, little motel in there. The palm trees are still, I think, still there. That's before you get to the wash, before you get to Washington, right in there near where that place is where they had these paintings out there.

PY: Did you know much about Point Happy or what was happening around there?

CH: No. No, I saw that bridge washed out there on Highway 111 right there. Are you . . . Now there's a couple of Point Happys, you know, around throughout the desert. Are you talking about where you cross, where the shoulder rock comes down now and 111 is cut between it, and you go across the bridge where the Deep Canyon . . .

PY: No, I'm thinking of Washington and 111.

CH: Yes. Well, okay.

PY: Yes.

CH: Just before you get to there.

PY: Right.

CH: Is where the shoulder mountain comes down. And you got sticking up on both sides. And then, of course, on this side it goes right on up to the mountains. Well, just west of there is where Deep Canyon Wash comes down. That's what they had the big flood over, you know, come down through Indian Wells. And they had a lot of trouble there. But I saw that bridge out a couple of times since I've been down here. There's a bridge in there now. And, of course, when Washington was first put in, why there was no bridge across the Whitewater there. In fact, the first big rain they didn't have the flood like they did when Kathleen struck here. That

was an unusual situation, of course, because it was just the big heavy rain up at the mountains. They say it rained ten inches up there. The forest rangers say. And it had no place to go, but out of Dead Indian Canyon and down to Deep Canyon. And, of course, Deep Canyon is a big long canyon, picks up a lot of water. And anyway, Whitewater was flooded many times when you could not get across. And that's before the bridge, the first . . .

TAPE 1, SIDE 2:

PY: Okay.

CH: Well, several times I've seen it when this valley was cut in two by the Whitewater Wash coming down. The only way you would be able to get through would be Palm Canyon and you could get across there. Or go to Indio and get across. Otherwise, that side of the valley was completely isolated from this side. Of course, there wasn't much, but when you're talking about Thousand Palms and, oh, there was some early subdivisions, that little thing out on Cook Road. I think it's on Cook Road. That was built, one of the first ones that was built the other side of the Whitewater. And even we were cut off from our location. Couldn't get over to where we, where

Mrs. Sunderland lives now.

PY: You had to go to Indio.

CH: Either Indio or clear up to Palm Springs. And then, of course, they built the Bob Hope. Then the next one was the Washington Bridge. And that isn't too old. I mean that was only built one, five or six years ago anyway. And any kind of, well, you know what happens on Miles. They work on that every time they have a heavy rain, why that goes. And they work on it and put in that pipe and repave it. And seems like all the money they spend on repairing these roads, they could build a bridge. You have the same condition on Date Palm and Cathedral Canyon. It's impassable any time. Many times it's impassable.

PY: For long periods, too.

CH: Yes. Monterey is another one which is, of course, that wasn't as important as the others because it did not go clear through. But now they've had so much on the other side of the wash that's developing that, or the other side of the, I say the wash, I mean Whitewater. They're going to have to build several bridges in here to keep this community together because if they had some of the rains. Well, they just had one not too long ago that wiped out everything. In fact, they came very close to

losing the Bob Hope Bridge there one time not too long ago. Remember when it was closed and they had to get their engineers out to inspect it and did a lot of back drilling in there to put it back together again. As a matter of fact, I guess it washed out some of the approaches. That's not too long ago. That's within the last year or so.

PY: Just one other thing. I think you were, I mean, seventy-three, I was just curious if incorporation changed construction policies in the area, when Palm Desert incorporated, or if you were at all involved or had any feelings about the co-communities who have sort of developed separately.

CH: Well, of course, when we were, when I built out there on Washington what I call our resort house and Mrs. Darby's place, you didn't even get a, you didn't even have to get a county permit. As a matter of fact, I stopped in Riverside County Building Department when I was building that to find out if I needed a permit. And they said no. That is, I forget the name they called it, anyway, territory that's not under their jurisdiction. Well, it's under their jurisdiction, but they don't have an inspector, so go ahead and build. So that's why you have a lot of junk out there that's built down Darby Road.

There's a lot of stuff there. But then, of course, later, why we had a county office right here in Palm Desert, Building Department. And then, of course, now it's moved into Indio. But you had pretty strict county rules before this was incorporated.

PY: So it really didn't influence you one way or another?

CH: It influenced me at first because I was still thinking about building when it was first incorporated, but it being a new city, well, I wish you weren't recording this. But it . . .

PY: Want me to turn it off?

CH: Yes, I'd rather.

CH: The Darby Company had a contractor's license, but we never did contract any building. We always built for ourselves even though we had the license and could have contracted. But we were always too busy building our own, so we never bid on anything like a contractor would. And then when Darby died, why of course, the license died or the contractor's license died, of course, with him. So that was the end of me and any of my connection with doing any contracting. So all my building has been for myself on a speculation basis, buying and selling.

And now as I say when people ask me, well, do you have that place over there that you used to have. And I'll say, no, I don't. Oh, you sold it. I said, no, I didn't sell it. I gave it away because alongside of prices like these, this next one here, the other side of the water company lot that Sanders bought. Now that's not too many, well, about ten years ago. I sold that to them, I think, for around sixty-eight thousand dollars, a three-unit thing. Of course, we can go back anyplace you want to look and say that same thing. The most recent big increase in land that I have seen is in the old Ramon Acres. That's out on Ramon Road. It's not in the city of Palm Springs, but it's very close. It's this side of the wash there that goes through. And there's an old development in there that was put on, I don't know when, many, many years ago. I would say probably in the, into the forties probably even before the war days that development was put in there.

PY: Now is this beyond Date, no . . .

CH: Yes, it's beyond Date Palm. Even beyond, closer to Palm Springs than even Cathedral Canyon.

PY: Closer to Palm Springs than Cathedral Canyon.

CH: Yes. I can't, there's nothing there to identify that,

but it's between Cathedral Canyon and . . .

PY: Bogey?

CH: Yes, probably be along in there.

PY: But not the dream homes. They're right off of Bogey.

CH: That's back in.

PY: Yes.

CH: Yes. It's probably just east of those. There's an old subdivision in there known as the Ramon Acres now. I inherited a lot in there that my sister had, that she had bought because her company was selling or reselling this property. And, I don't know, they probably gave her one of these lots. Anyway, when I acquired it, I inquired about what the thing was worth, the lot was. And at that time there was lots in there that I could have bought for thirty-three hundred dollars or so, something, not far off of Ramon Road, in the first block or two in there. Streets were in, all the utilities were in. Now this is less than three years ago. It will be three years in April. Could have bought a lot in there for thirty-three hundred dollars, or there was several of them because I called brokers that had signs on there just to see what they were going for. Today they are worth ten thousand dollars for one of those lots. Now

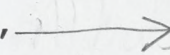
that's in less than three years. Of course, you can go back to a lot of things like I'm telling you about Bermuda Dunes and these other, well, this thing that I built here. Of course, that's more years, but that's the most recent. High, I mean increase in value. So there you've got an increase in value of over three times, almost double for three years, doubled every year. And now they're building on it. For a long time it just laid dormant, nothing. Nothing was ever built on it.

PY: So it had just been developed before the war, but nothing had

CH: It was subdivided before the war. I'm pretty sure it was before the war. And that's like with Palm Village goes back before the war. Because that was all ready here.

PY: Was there any activity going on, wartime activity going on, here when you first came out?

CH: I never saw it. I didn't come out that early. They say that this whole area here was used by one contingent of Patton's Army. Of course you'll find many areas throughout the desert where he practiced and organized his, for his invasion of Africa. But this definitely was

used because I have dug up in some of these that come down here, tributaries from the Deep Canyon and Dead Indian, dug up parts of old jeeps and old Army equipment. When we built Silver Spur back as late as that. But before that when, what's her name,  *Albasennia Nobsan* no one owned all of Silver Spur and sold it to Swilk. His part of it, but she owned many, many acres. Now she's dead and gone. You can't look her up. But Swilk ought to be able to tell you a lot about her. He used to fight with her continuously. And maybe this Evelyn Seeman can tell you a lot. What about Evelyn, oh, gosh, what's her . . . Evelyn, Evelyn . . .

PY: Young?

CH: Young. Yes, the writer.

PY: Yes, she's part of the Historical Society.

CH: Yes. And also, well, how long was she here? Wasn't she her before I was?

PY: No. No, she's fairly recent.

CH: Oh. What about Jeannette?

PY: Constantina

CH: Yes.

PY: I mean

CH: Ex-*constantina* Now it's . . .

PY: Yoxsimer.

CH: Yoxsimer.

PY: I'm going to talk to them on Friday.

CH: Yes. She was here way back. She and Ben. And we knew them well, used to go back and forth. And then, of course, Yoxsimer is not of this. He's an oldtimer of Rancho Mirage. I don't know whether he's that old or not, but I know he had that station there for a long time, that Arco Station that's been torn down. But I don't know what else to tell you that I've experienced. Only the time I remember the time when we had just built this resort house that I speak of, that I call a resort house. And I built it out of concrete block and we had just framed the roof and, of course, it was just not sealed yet with a plastered ceiling. And one of these windstorms came up and we were in this house sleeping. I don't think we had furniture. I think we just had bedding, mattresses, on the floor and so forth. And my two gals were with us. And it blew all that night. And we got up in the morning and just had to throw the sand off. It just came through the, just the joints, and they were joined pretty well, blocking between the joist. But actually, you know, you don't make a perfect air-tight joint on that rough framing. And the sand came

in and just covered us with sand. It's pretty well gone, I think. I think that they've got control of it. I think there isn't . . . of course, Palm City blocks a lot of the wind because they came from the north-westerly direction and hit that particular area. And I'm trying to think, do you know Chuck Langwell? (phone rings) That name doesn't ring . . . that district. And he also, by the way, did the grading for I think both Indian Wells and what's the other big one there next to it?

PY: El Dorado.

CH: El Dorado. I know he did the grading for El Dorado because I remember going over there to see him a couple of times when that was just sagebrush and nothing. And when we heard that those things were going in there, I think we were still going back and forth, or maybe still located there. We weren't living too long on Washington. I mean permanently living because right away we bought this place up in Silver Spur and I started to build right away. But when I heard what was going in, that they were going to build this and Indian Wells and all that was going in, I thought, oh, that's just a lot of talk. Why would anyone, it was just

sagebrush. It was just stupid to me. I thought, holy smoke, you people are crazy. But they did it.

PY: Yes, and it looks nice.

CH: Yes, it's nice, especially the, well, all of your classic is starting now. That's when they have things fixed up pretty nice. But I still don't know what they're going to do about this grading. They seem, or Flood Control, they're doing nothing. If they would put in curbs and gutters in a lot of these streets. Of course, I don't know where that would go. It would all go down on poor Portola, and that's in bad shape enough now when they have a storm. But we had water come through here that last rain, and I had to replace two carpets in these units, believe it or not. That's last July when we had that heavy downpour. There was no dike breaking or that sort of thing, but it rains here about four inches in about four hours. And it just couldn't take it.

PY: What was the worst rains you remember.

CH: That's the worst rain I ever remember down there was that one. As a matter of fact, Kathleen, when we had that big flood when it did so much damage and broke the dike, of course, this last one it broke some dike up

there. But it wasn't the big one. But that's the heaviest rain I have seen down here. And, of course, we got it because it overflowed the streets in back and came right through those houses in the back into our backyard being lower than they are. Everything, of course, is lower as it goes down to Whitewater. Came right back in and it just couldn't get out of our yards fast enough in the back, see. And came in through these sliding glass windows. And no way to stop it. It was what, four o'clock in the morning. You were here then, were you? Were you here in Palm Desert?

PY: No, Palm Springs.

CH: Well, then you didn't have it there, you see. Palm . . . it just seemed to be concentrated in Rancho Mirage and Palm Desert. Even Indio didn't have it. Or Palm Springs, see. It seemed to be a concentration of cloud-burst right over. Well, that can happen. In fact, the old, old Davidson, the civil engineer that first came out to lay out the subdivision over there, I remember him talking to Darby and the rest of us that were there. And he said, this area, this whole desert area, is subject to flash floods. That it can pick just even a square

mile and just dump many inches of water right there. And that's similar to what happened in July. However, it was a much bigger area because they got it on the other side of 74. And it went over the Magnesia Falls area, wherever that is there in Rancho Mirage. I never did see the damage there, but it certainly did a lot of damage along Hedgehog and up in there. But we got it here, but for no reason at all. Of course, it was just, well, the water flowed over the, went into their driveways and through their garages around the house. And this fellow right behind us, he had just, he had a double garage and he had just finished it, refinished it as a recreation playroom or something. And, gosh, it went right through that, right into our yard. We didn't get it here, fortunately. But in the next one, next town, in fact, Tom got some. Their bedrooms, there was water seeped into there. But it wasn't bad enough. I have a wet vac and I got over there right away and dried it up. But they were, their back bedroom was wet where it had come through because it came in a nice, we stood here and watched it go over that curb. And how that sand rock ever missed it because that whole thing is below the street level. But I watched that water come

down Shadow Mountain and go over and it looked like Niagara Falls going down that terrace there and in those front doors. I think the only thing that saved them is that they were smart enough, and they've got about a six-inch depth from their walkway up into their floor level which, of course, if I were going to build now that's the way I'd do it. I would do. But in the days when we were building this sort of thing, everything wanted, we wanted to keep it as level as we could. So here we are. Too close. Doesn't take long to fill up one of these yards with a couple of inches of water. You can't get out fast enough, you see. Comes out to a little opening here, this gate here on the side, and the same thing on the other side. So any water that comes into those yards back there has got to go out around. And, of course, we don't stop to think that there's going to be that much rainfall. Now in Kathleen when so many places got so much damage, we didn't have one single, this trouble.

PY: So you really never know, it really is a flash flood.

CH: You don't know. You never know. Well, I wish I could go back to the old days. I wish this place was like it was, you know, twenty years ago. I really do. I'm

selfish that way. I know that we've all made a lot of money since then. But I'd gladly go back to those days because then it was really a fun place to live. And now we don't know anybody around.

PY: Were there a lot of families in Palm Desert in the fifties?

CH: Yes. Yes, there was, well, when you say a lot, there was, yes, there was a lot of families. I've rented to, first buildings I built here, why I rented to families.

PY: Where were these people working?

CH: Well, one of them was a carpenter, Snodgrass. And I'm trying to think of that cleaning, that cleaner, what's his name, Russ. What's that cleaner in Indio?

PY: Dry cleaner?

CH: Yes. Has a nice big new plant there right behind the Alpha Beta store there. Russ, Russ . . . Anyway they had two girls. And they were, we picked them up, and there was several up in Silver Spur there.

PY: So people were working around in this area.

CH: Well, that's right. You're asking me what they were doing. Well, he had this cleaning, much smaller place in Indio. And . . .

PY: People were commuting easily then?

CH: Yes, they were commuting. Of course, then you didn't have

any gasoline problems. Yes, they were commuting with their cars. There was no transportation, of course. Of course, there still isn't any transportation. We had that bus supposed to run through here, but I wouldn't know when, and most people don't, so it doesn't do too much good because it's not steady enough like a regular bus in metropolitan areas. Because I just would not know when I go, have to take my little old Toyota in to have it serviced there into Cat City, why I know that there's a bus that I could get to come back here, but I don't know anything about it. I don't know where it stops, where to get it, so what happens. Florence come on in and then pick me up. I'm going to take my Toyota in to get it, and the same going into Indio to Fiesta Ford. We have a Ford. I know that there's a bus coming through here, but we don't know when and where. When we're not looking and don't want it, we're not looking for it, why there it is. But I'm just liable to go in there and wait there for two hours, sitting there waiting for that bus not knowing when it's coming. So it doesn't do us a lot of good. Their best, most sensible thing that they had when they were routing that bus was to go up through the Palm Desert Country Club because, well,

I don't know what percentage, but I do know that there's just a lot of people living there who do not drive cars. I mean they're too elderly or their eyesight is not good or they don't have a drivers license and that sort of thing. And they do, of course, they do have a market in there now and a bank and some facilities. But nothing like coming down to this area where the Safeway or the Market Basket where you got all kinds of stores and it's very little that they have there.

PY: It's not incorporated, though, is it?

CH: No.

PY: Is that county?

CH: It's the county. Yes, that's all county in there.

There was a big fight about it, you know. Who does it belong to? That's what I'd say. Why they call it Palm Desert because it will never be Palm Desert. Indian Wells will never let us cross their sphere of influence, as they call it. As a matter of fact, there was some big hassle over some acreage out there that straddled the sphere of influence when some outfit wanted to build, and they wanted it to be in Palm Desert. And there was quite a hassle over that. I don't know what ever happened to it. But you do have so much paperwork now. Let's see,

what did he say it cost you close to, it costs you today if you were going to take a piece of raw land and subdivide it beginning with the paperwork and the necessary year's time and what you would have to do, the improvement you'd have to put in, you'd have three thousand dollars in a lot. Not including the cost of the land. But just the paperwork and what you had to do because now you've got to put in curbs and utilities and all that. And now the subdivider has to pay for that. Used to be he didn't, even as late as when Swilt built Silver Spur. The gas company run their lines up in there. And the electric, Edison, run their power, but now you go and put in a subdivision and you got to pay a good part of it, the subdivider. And, of course, that's where you get your high cost of housing because right away you've got a ten thousand dollar investment in the ground, even the cheapest lot and get around.

PY: Well, I should let you get to some lunch.

CH: Yes, well, no, no hurry. But anyway, that's about as far as I can go. Probably the only interesting part about it is the Japanese, bringing them out here. But, however, if you're talking about Palm Desert, that is not Palm Desert. Really it's going to be Indio, I think, if it is ever taken in by anything because it's more or

less in their sphere of influence. It's certainly, well, I suppose Indian Wells might go into that because they've extended clear to Washington, haven't they now, at that intersection. They seem to have a lot to say. They're trying to develop that intersection of Washington and 111. And they, whether it's part of their city limits or not, I don't know, but I know they seem to be roused up about it and have a lot to say. So it must be, at least it's in their sphere of influence. So then if you extend on north from there, why you're going to run, take in Palm Desert Country Club.

PY: Well, good.

CH: The biggest part of your paper here, of your classified, is help wanted. And you can't go past any one of these big stores but what they have got a help wanted.

PY: So why did you move here? Why do you think people move here?

CH: Well, to get away from the humdrum, and we lived in L. A., we lived in an area. In fact, if you're going to live anywhere in the metropolitan area of Los Angeles, why when you go out on the street, why you're just in a rat race. And, of course, you've got smog there which we don't have here. And in that western part, in the south-

west part in the Inglewood area where we live, there were days on end, all through May and June and part of July, the fog would roll in and would clear up just in time for a new batch of fog to roll in. We went days and days without seeing the sun there. And that can get kind of monotonous. I hated that. And, of course, I've felt a lot better. I was beginning to have a lot of aches and arthritis and that sort of thing there on account of the weather. When I came down here, why no problem. However, I'm getting them again now. I'm getting them again now. Like I say, I wouldn't think of building anymore now. I look at it with, you know, licking my chops like I would like to get into it, but having been in it so long because when I learned the business, why we learned every phase of it. And there's very little that is done that I couldn't say, well, get out of the way, let me do it. That's my feeling now when I see these young fellows and the way they work. And, well, not all together the classic work, but the slowness of it.

PY: Yes.

CH: If I were running the jobber, my job, I'd say, look, get out of the way. Go on and go home. Let me do it is the way I would feel because we learned, like I say, every

phase from the plastering. In fact, I worked on the ceiling and just going to school we were taken, a group of us that were specializing in work, building work, and we actually worked on the ceiling of Graumman's Chinese Theatre. For a long time, if you've ever seen, probably you haven't, but it is one of the most ornate ceilings in theatres.

PY: Yes.

CH: Of course, now they don't build any big theatres like that anymore. Fact they've tore down a lot of them in Los Angeles, a lot of those big theatres. They've torn them down. But that in Hollywood, and I guess the old Egyptian Theatre is still in existence. But I remember so well there actually going there and working with the workmen that were doing that ceiling there. And the same with all the other, plumbing and framing and the whole works. So when I see what these guys work, why I think, oh, my gosh. No wonder it costs so much. However, they have saved, you know, the salvation of the cost is technology because you take your plumbing alone. Think back. I don't know whether you ever saw it, but all the sewer lines were put together in lengths of cast iron pipe. And they were caulked with lead.

Fiber caulking. And then lead poured in. And then they were caulked. Each piece. And clear up to the roof was put together that way. All handwork. Now when you stop and think, if we had to be paying this hundred dollar a day, which a lot of these construction people are getting or close to it, just to do that. Now they put all this stuff together. It's like a toy. It's all stuck together. Plastic, and they . . .

PY: Yes.

CH: Wrap and put it together. And they make a whole tree. What I mean by a tree is the whole bathroom setup including the main sewer line ready to connect up to go on out and ready to take off for their vent pipes in one piece. And one man will pick it up and put it in. No way was that used to be in. Of course, it's the same way with all your electrical work. They used to put it all, all your boxes, all your main, where you're coming in on your main switches and all. Had to be all put together on the job where now it all comes, you order what you want and it comes all ready. You just snap it in. All your lumber, not all your lumber, but in the old days many times, why we would have to designate one carpenter for about two days just to cut studs to

the right length. He'd have a template thing because the lumber came just random. Well, not random, but not down to the perfection that they get it today. Now you get a whole batch of studs all wrapped up in a tape and they're exactly the same length. But them days we used to, and not only that, with a hand saw. Now, of course, I'm talking long before this. I'm talking back in the twenties, the late twenties. I'm not that old that I was doing that in the early twenties, but I did go into the building business in the late twenties.

Soon after World War I. But so I've seen a great change in it. Some of it I criticize and some I don't, of course. And as I say if it were not for technology in the way we do now, we buy these windows all ready made. We used to make them all, the frame, on the job. And the weights and the rope and the weights, and double hung windows and that sort of thing was the big thing back in those days. But now, of course, you buy all these things all ready made. And you can even buy doors now with the frame all made and you just put it in. So it's lucky for that that we're able to. I call it technology, but it's really, well, it verges on that in a way. Factory made stuff. They make it by the

thousands and the factories stamp it out. Where on the old days you used to have to make it on the job.

END OF INTERVIEW